



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

March 4, 2010

Dear Governor:

Today we are announcing the first round finalists in the Race to the Top competition. This historic program has been a catalyst for education reform across this country, prompting states like yours to think deeply about how to improve their education system. With your leadership, stakeholders across America have sat down together, looked hard at what is and is not working, and developed bold and creative reform plans that give us great hope for the future of America.

The Department received 41 applications for the first phase of Race to the Top. Each application underwent a comprehensive and rigorous review by an expert panel of independent reviewers, and we have selected the following finalists: Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

If your State is a finalist, I congratulate you. We will follow up with further details regarding the finalist presentation that your State team will make during the week of March 15. The purpose of the presentation is not to offer new material but simply to clarify the material you have already provided and respond to questions from reviewers.

If your State is not a finalist, I applaud you for applying and urge you to reapply in Phase 2. While I cannot predict how many awards we will make in the first round of funding, I assure you there will be plenty of money remaining in the program after the first round of funding is complete. At the conclusion of the Phase I competition, we will send you your scores and reviewer comments, which will be helpful in developing your Phase 2 application.

While only the very best proposals will be funded in the Race to the Top competition, every state that has applied is already a winner because of the hard work and collaboration required to reach this point. States have eliminated barriers to reform, aligned federal funds to support comprehensive state reform plans, developed new partnerships, and engaged in candid, forward-thinking conversations with a broad group of stakeholders about improving education. I urge you to continue those conversations, which will lay the foundation for transformational change in our educational system, help secure our role in the global economy, and ensure that our children share fully in the blessings of a strong and growing America.

If you have any further questions, please have your staff contact racetothetop@ed.gov or 202-205-3775. Thanks again for your hard work to date and thank you in advance for the work ahead.

Sincerely,

/s/

Arne Duncan